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Seventy years separate the battlefields of the Second World War from the challenges of the contemporary strategic environment, yet its study remains central to our understanding of generalship and the practice of operational art. Arguably, the leading Joint Force Land Component Commander and practitioner of operational art during the Second World War was Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, principally for his performance as General Officer Commanding (GOC) XIV Army during the war in Burma from October 1943 to May 1945. To examine the essence of generalship at the operational level, this paper examines Slim's 'vital presence' as Army Commander. From late 1943, Slim rebuilt and revitalized a shattered Eastern Army; harnessed a fractious coalition to common operational objectives; integrated large special operations into a coherent theater operational vision; and conceived a bold, ambitious campaign design to seize the initiative, degrade, and then destroy the potent Japanese Army Group. Slim's mastery of Army Command through all phases of war demonstrates a gift for binding the conceptual art of systemic campaign design, a deep expertise in the practicalities of warfighting, a singular genius for personal leadership, and ruthless determination on the battlefield. Slim's performance as Army Commander is of enduring relevance both as an archetype of modern generalship, and as a prototype for the contemporary construct of the Joint Force Land Component Commander.

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Lieutenant General William Slim, General Officer Commanding XIVth Army
Indo-Burma Theater - October 1943 to May 1943



Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, KG, GCB, GCMG, GCVO, GBE, DSO, MC, KStJ
13th Governor-General of Australia (1953-1959)
Shown here with Australia's longest serving Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies

"It is the level in between – the operational level – where the general really earns his pay, because it is at that level that a coherent campaign plan is developed to convert strategic objectives into meaningful tactical level activity. This is, therefore, much more about design than building, more about creative art than the logic of science. This is the level where real value is added, especially in today's complex environment."¹

General Sir Richard Dannatt

The art of command at the operational level of war has long been shrouded in myth and allegory: for Sun Tzu it was the manifestation of the 'heaven-born captain', for Clausewitz, 'military genius'. The most successful practitioners were seen to have an intangible 'something' few possessed, born of bloody experience and lifelong study, which professional military education failed to replicate. At its essence, generalship is the creative ability to harness operational art to fighting power, and has long been seen as the province of only the most capable, and experienced military leaders.² Throughout history successful battlefield commanders have sought to balance the dictates of political guidance, the needs of their Allies and partners, the resources at their disposal with the constraints of their environment, and the risks, opportunities and potential of their opponent.

Today, operational command in the land domain is exercised through a Joint Force Land Component Commander: the Army, or Corps Commander responsible for the design, planning, joint-force integration, and execution of land campaigns and operations to link tactical activities to politico-strategic objectives.³ Yet the requirements of modern commanders differ from those of their predecessors by degree, not by kind: giving an enduring relevance to the campaigns of the most successful practitioners of operational art.

Seventy years separate the battlefields of the Second World War from the challenges of the contemporary strategic environment, yet its study remains central to our understanding of generalship and the practice of operational art. Arguably, the leading

Joint Force Land Component Commander and practitioner of operational art during the Second World War was Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, principally for his performance as General Officer Commanding (GOC) XIV Army during the war in Burma from October 1943 to May 1945.⁴ To examine the essence of generalship at the operational level, this paper examines Slim's 'vital presence' as Army Commander.

"In retrospect the great curve of operations from the repulse of Ha-Go in Arakan, through Imphal and Kohima to the crossing of the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy, and south again to the threshold of Rangoon, has a beautiful consistency. But the aesthetic quality of the curve was not a casual effect. No other senior commander in South-East Asia envisaged it; Slim was the artist whose inner eye conceived it and whose master hand gave it visible form."⁵

From late 1943, Slim rebuilt and revitalized a shattered Eastern Army; harnessed a fractious coalition to common operational objectives; integrated large special operations into a coherent theater operational vision; and conceived a bold, ambitious campaign design to seize the initiative, degrade, and then destroy the potent Japanese Army Group. Slim's mastery of Army Command through all phases of war demonstrates a gift for binding the conceptual art of systemic campaign design, a deep expertise in the practicalities of warfighting, a singular genius for personal leadership, and a ruthless determination on the battlefield. Slim's performance as Army Commander is of enduring relevance both as an archetype of modern generalship, and as a prototype for the contemporary construct of the Joint Force Land Component Commander.

The Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942 was a humiliating defeat for the British Empire, and brought the victorious Japanese Burma Area Army to the very edge of the Indian Border.⁶ The British Eastern Army was forced into the longest retreat in British military history, over 1600 miles of torturous mud tracks, thick jungle, forbidding mountain ranges, and severe tropical weather.⁷ For India Command, completely unprepared for the loss of Burma and the threat of invasion across its Eastern Border, two

years drifted past on the defensive while sufficient military, economic, logistic and political strength was harnessed to take the war to the Japanese.⁸

Throughout those two years the Burma Theater had the lowest strategic priority and was the subject of a long, frustrating and bitter debate about its strategic direction.⁹ By 1942, the Americans dominated the strategic direction of the war, and were increasingly disdainful of any attempt by the British to reclaim former colonial possessions. For the American politico-strategic leadership, if Burma held any meaning at all, it was as a means to ensure the strategic link with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Forces operating in Southern China.¹⁰ To do so, the Allies were reliant upon the uncertain flow of combat supplies and equipment across the 'Hump Route' over the Himalayas.¹¹ The 'Hump Route' was completely dependent upon the growing airfield complex in the Assam province of Northeast India, and the road/rail links back to the port at Calcutta.¹² Furthermore, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were convinced that this was at best a partial solution; the only effective way to support the Chinese was to build an overland route across Assam and Northern Burma to intersect with the old Burma Road on the border into the Nationalist Base at Kunming.¹³

Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff were deeply suspicious of Chiang Kai-shek's value as a strategic partner, and the Chinese contribution to the war effort. Deeply embarrassed by the string of Japanese victories in South East Asia, Burma was critical to the defense of the Empire's most prized possession India, and an important firm base for future operations to retake Singapore or the Malay Peninsula. Nonetheless, if the communications link with China was the overriding strategic objective, then the British Chiefs of Staff were convinced the only way to do it was to

clear the Japanese from Central Burma and retake Rangoon.¹⁴ While British Imperial ambitions may have been easy to disregard, it is difficult to argue that the Japanese with a potent Army Group in Central Burma, could allow the Allies to maintain a major road link for combat supplies and heavy equipment into Southern China. Over the course of the war, the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee (CCS) grudgingly accepted the importance of taking offensive action to secure the 'Hump Route', defend Assam, and weaken the Japanese position in Burma.¹⁵

Nonetheless, there was no appetite for an overland campaign into Central Burma, some of the worst terrain for the conduct of large-scale military operations during the war with dense jungle covered mountain ranges, torrential monsoons, a severe tropical climate, and the ever present threat of disease.¹⁶ The horrendous conditions, and the almost complete lack of a viable road and rail system capable of supporting a modern army, made the logistical problems facing such a campaign seem insurmountable.¹⁷

By late 1943, in Tokyo it was clear the war had turned inexorably against Imperial Japan. Triggered by the worsening situation in the South Pacific and Italy's exit from the Axis partnership, in September 1943 a major Imperial Conference issued the "General Outline of Future War Direction" designed to reframe Japanese strategy. In the context of "...resolute measures to build up a decisive military capability", the directive ordered the preparation of an "Absolute Defense Sphere" that ran from the Kuriles, to the Bonins, through the mandated islands of the Inner South Sea, on to the western half of New Guinea, to the Sundas Islands, before coming to rest on the 'western wall' of Burma.¹⁸ The sphere represented a strategic defensive line "...to be held at all costs."¹⁹

Within this context, Burma evolved into the southwestern bastion of Japan's strategic defense, with three critical operational objectives. Firstly, the Japanese must deny Burma to the Allies to ensure it could not be used as a forward base for offensive operations against the resource rich regions of Singapore, the Malay Peninsula, and the Dutch East Indies. Secondly, Burma sat astride Chiang Kai-shek's only lifeline to the world, and that if successfully interdicted would facilitate his isolation, and therefore enhance the Japanese war effort in Northwestern China. Finally, by late 1943 Burma developed into an obvious choice for a major Allied counteroffensive, and therefore required significant resources and focus to forestall attempts to penetrate the "Absolute Defense Sphere" before it could be fully established.²⁰

Field Marshal Count Teruchi Hisaichi as Commander Southern Army was responsible for all operations throughout South-East Asia and the South-West Pacific. In Burma, operational direction was delegated to a small Army Group: the Burma Area Army commanded by Lieutenant General Kawabe Masakazu, consisting of the 15th Army in Central Burma based out of Mandalay, the 33th Army in the East out of Lashio, and the 28th Army on the Arakan Coast.²¹ The Burma Area Army was principally responsible for the defense of the western perimeter of the Southern Army's area of responsibility, with limited operations permissible against the communications link with China. Nonetheless, by early 1944, the Japanese were determined to take the initiative, invade Assam, and threaten Northeastern India in a desperate bid to forestall Allied offensive operations, secure their western defensive perimeter, and sever the 'Hump Route' once and for all.²²

Allied strategic and operational planners, including Slim, were attracted to the possibility of conducting amphibious lodgments along the Southwestern coast of Burma,

consolidate and then advance north against the Japanese rear areas.²³ Reality intervened: the Burma Theater was at the very end of the strategic priority list, and there was simply no foreseeable way that sufficient shipping, aircraft, reinforcements and especially critical amphibious landing craft would be reallocated to Burma from ongoing operations in Italy, let alone the Central Pacific or then-anticipated D-Day landings. Nor was there any appetite for an overland advance into Central Burma, seen as beyond the capacity of the weak, battered British force that had fled in 1942.²⁴

Though disease and exhaustion took a heavy toll, the demoralized Eastern Army withdrew across the Indian border in reasonable order, due in large part to the efforts of the recently appointed General Officer Commanding BURCORPS (Burma Corps), the then-Lieutenant General William Slim. By 1942, Slim had been a professional soldier for most of his adult life.²⁵ Born of modest origins, Slim was only able to gain a commission in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment due to the British Army's massive expansion of 1914. Serving with distinction at Gallipoli, and in Mesopotamia, wounded twice, awarded the Military Cross: Slim ended the war a Captain Staff Officer in the Headquarters of the British Indian Army. After the war despite objections from the War Office, Slim transferred permanently to the Indian Army, joining the 6th Gurkha Rifles, whose Nepalese soldiers had made lasting impression during the Gallipoli campaign. Over the next twenty years, Slim would divide his professional attention between regimental, staff and educational appointments.

His regimental soldiering with the Royal Gurkha Rifles included a range of irregular operations on the Northwest Frontier of today's Pakistan, where he learnt the languages, customs and social mores of the polyglot forces of the British Indian Army,

and served with a number of junior officers who would go on to serve as senior leaders with him in Burma - experiences and relationships that would prove critical for his future in command of the XIV Army. Though his experiences are indicative of a long tradition of 'Sepoy Generals' comfortable in command of large, diverse coalitions at the edge of empire, Slim proved particularly skilled at connecting with the nineteen distinct ethno-sectarian and religious groups of the XIV Army.²⁶ In these experiences lay the foundation for Slim's success as a multinational, coalition *Joint Force Land Component Commander*: forging common purpose, building trust, and developing a proud sense of identity within an army comprising Indians of at least four faiths, East and West Africans, Burmese, Nepalese, and British soldiers far from home.

Slim also served in a number of key staff appointments wrestling with a range of complex training, administrative and logistical challenges, principally within HQ Indian Army, and in a range of educational opportunities as both an instructor and student: including time as Directing Staff at the British Army Staff College at Camberley, and student at the Imperial Defense College. One contemporary, then-Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Nye, described Slim as "... in a class by himself... probably the best all round officer of his rank in the Imperial Army".²⁷ For the first thirty months of the Second World War, Slim was "...consigned to backwaters." commanding the 10th Indian Brigade, and then 10th Indian Division in minor operations at the very periphery of the war; against the Italians in the Sudan, the Vichy French in Iraq, and in Persia.²⁸ After the disastrous Japanese invasion, Slim was sent into a rapidly deteriorating situation in Southern Burma to assume command of a Corps under Field Marshal Alexander, GOC Eastern Army.²⁹

After over two years of stalemate and failure, most recently the disastrous Arakan Offensives of 1942-43, and in the wake of the Quadrant Conference in Quebec of August 1943, the CCS Committee made sweeping changes to the strategic guidance, and command structure for the war in Burma.³⁰ Most notably, they established a new headquarters for theater command in South-East Asia under Admiral Louis Mountbatten, as Supreme Allied Commander Southeast Asia.³¹ Dashing, charismatic, and an expert in joint operations, Mountbatten and Slim developed a lasting trust, and a robust, collegial discourse from which emerged a special unity of vision to destroy the Japanese presence in Burma.³² Mountbatten harnessed political support for Slim's operational vision, ran interference, fought for and gathered the critical resources required for Slim's ambitious campaign design.³³ From this solid foundation of trust, Slim demonstrates the ideal *Joint Force Land Component Commander*, deftly fostering unity of purpose, shared commitment and interdependence within the larger joint, multinational coalition. From Slim's particularly close relationship with his senior air commanders, to his effective partnership with India Command that develops his administrative base. Most notably, in the often frustrating experience of attempting to harness the Nationalist Chinese formations of the Northern Combat Area Command, and their notoriously anglophobic American Chief of Staff, General 'Vinegar Joe' Stilwell.

The CCS issued Mountbatten revised strategic guidance for the 1943 campaigning season which assented to limited offensive operations along the Arakan Coast, and into Northern Burma to ensure safety of American airfields, and set the conditions for later operations to restore an overland route into China. Field Marshal Auchinleck replaced Wavell as GOC India, bringing a fresh perspective, support and renewed energy to Slim's

administrative base, and General George Giffard would be appointed as GOC XI Army Group. Nonetheless, it was Mountbatten's far-reaching decision on 26 October 1943 to appoint Slim as GOC of the recently renamed XIV Army, in effect the de facto *Joint Force Land Component Commander*, that most directly shaped the future direction of the war in Burma.³⁴

Lieutenant General Slim faced daunting operational challenges when formally appointed to command the newly restructured XIV Army. The Burma Theater during the Second World War was one of the largest, most inhospitable, and complex then faced by Allied planners. The primary task of XIV Army was to close with, and destroy a well-led, experienced and fanatical opponent in the Japanese Army Group, proven masters of jungle warfighting and far more agile than the British and Chinese formations they faced. In Slim's words:

"...our object became not to defend India, to stop the Japanese advance, or even to occupy Burma, but to destroy the Japanese Army, to smash it as an evil thing."³⁵ Slim

Slim's campaign ranged over hundreds of miles of dense jungle, daunting mountain ranges, swamp ridden coastal plains, and in a severe tropical climate that swung from intense dry seasons, to the torrential rains of the South Asian monsoon. Exhaustion, tropical disease, intense heat, monsoons, and the primitive infrastructure all conspired to make Burma an impossibly challenging environment to move, fight and sustain large modern military formations.³⁶ Compounding the complexities of the environment, the war in Burma was at the very lowest strategic priority, and the source of bitter squabbling and recrimination for Allied strategic leadership.

By late 1943, Slim no longer agreed with the conventional wisdom that an overland advance was impossible, and saw clearly that there would be no massive

infusion of personnel and equipment that alternative operational options required. There could be no significant amphibious operation along the Arakan Coast, nor could the Chinese provide much more than a limited supporting effort in the North. Nonetheless, as *Joint Force Land Component Commander*, Slim's primary responsibility is to design a bold, coherent and achievable campaign, and then drive the detailed planning, synchronization, and integration of joint effects required for the sequential or simultaneous land force operations needed to achieve the theater objectives³⁷.

Furthermore, Slim faced high level skepticism about XIV Army's ability to succeed against the Japanese, which resulted in considerable pressure to limit the scope of his campaign design to relatively minor objectives: principally clearing the Japanese from the Arakan Peninsula to enable more effective air operations, or from across Northern Burma to facilitate the land-link with Stilwell's Chinese. Throughout, Slim remained firmly focused on his principal operational goal, and XIV Army's main effort: the destruction of the Japanese Burma Area Army. Only by destroying Japanese combat power could the Allies ensure the security of India, create robust land based lines of communications into Southern China, and retake Burma as a base for future operations against Singapore and the Malay Peninsula.

From these base assumptions, Slim's pragmatic, far reaching operational vision for the reconquest of Burma evolved. Firstly, Slim retained a resolute focus on the destruction of the Japanese as the overriding objective for XIV Army operations: though he understood clearly that an overland campaign would be as much a struggle against the terrain, weather, and sustainment, as a struggle against the Japanese.³⁸ Following the 1942 retreat, Slim had first hand knowledge of the terrain in Central Burma, and made

particular note of the central plains around Shwebo in the confluence of the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers. If he could mass his decisive advantage in armor, artillery and close air support against the bulk of Japanese Army on the Shwebo Plains, he knew could destroy the Burma Area Army as a coherent force.

For this to happen Slim needed to get his Army across the heavily vegetated, mountainous Naga Hills of Northwest Burma, and two of the largest rivers in the world, while maintaining a steady flow of combat supplies across a tenuous road network. There would be no rail link, a primitive road network, and a vulnerable river system for which to feed his divisions, forcing a reliance on aerial resupply to sustain the advance of just a portion of his Army. Slim saw clearly that before he could start, he would need to severely weaken the Japanese. In effect, to reduce the strength of his forces to a level sustainable with the limited road and rail system at his disposal, yet potent enough to destroy the Japanese on the plains. In Slim's words to "...seriously weaken the Japanese Army, before we plunged into Burma".³⁹

If Slim could maneuver his army into position, mass its combat power, sustain his force, and destroy the Japanese in a decisive battle for Central Burma, then he would be a position to open an overland route to China, recapture Rangoon with its vital port, then posture for future operations to retake Singapore, or the Malay Peninsula. Before that would be possible, Slim must rebuild, and retrain the shattered remnants of the Eastern Army, and infuse it with a new identity and determination to close with the seemingly indomitable Japanese.

After the retreat from Burma, the British Far Eastern Army was in a parlous state. It had been decisively outthought, outfought, and was now thoroughly demoralized. The

Army's administrative and logistic base was in disarray, and they faced crippling shortages of almost every critical resource. Against an agile, austere and ruthless opponent like the Japanese, Slim faced the urgent challenge to reshape his battered army, prepare his administrative base, and then craft an operational, and tactical vision on how best to overcome these crushing disadvantages.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the theater's low strategic priority all but guaranteed Slim must fight the Japanese with the resources and sustainment at his disposal in late 1943. Again, Slim demonstrates the moral courage and operational vision of an ideal *Joint Force Land Component Commander*. Given the state of his battered command, the largely indifferent strategic enthusiasm, and sheer scale of the obstacles Slim faced, another commander may have felt entirely justified reducing the scope of his operations, or even remaining passive until additional resources could be made available. As one contemporary later remarked, Slim's "...ability to do so much with so little was a measure of his trueness greatness as a commander."⁴¹ Slim described this tension as "...the real test of a great commander in the field... to be a judge of administrative risk."⁴².

First as Commander of the XV Indian Corps, then as GOC XIV Army, Slim tirelessly rebuilt his shattered army, preparing it to not only repulse determined Japanese offensive operations, but also to aggressively seize the initiative, close with and destroy their fighting power as a precursor for retaking Burma. Slim revitalized, retrained, and infused the XIV Army with the belief that they were more than capable of defeating the Japanese.⁴³ Over the course of eight months, Slim instituted a detailed, relentless rebuilding program of training and repair, stripping his maneuver formations of their

cumbersome heavy equipment, training his soldiers in jungle warfighting, and hardening them to the severe conditions in which they would operate.

Demonstrating his broad professional experience, his administrative expertise, deep understanding of training management, and mastery of staff work, Slim oversaw a complete overhaul of the XIV Army. Units deployed into the jungle for weeks at a time, and learnt to maneuver within, and fight from it.⁴⁴ Strict discipline, improved conditions and demanding standards saw the health and fitness, leadership and confidence improve of the army as whole improve. A detailed training program saw dramatic improvements in inter-arm coordination, employment of fires, integration of close air support, aerial resupply and sustainment, and the maneuver of large formations across inhospitable terrain. Improvisation would see significant material gains to the Army's supply situation, and prepare them to sustain large formations across the hostile terrain. As Slim describes:

"There were infantry battle schools, artillery training centers, co-operation courses with R.A.F., experiments with tanks in the jungle, classes in watermanship and river crossing and a dozen other instructional activities, all in full swing. Our training grew more ambitious until we were staging inter-divisional exercises over wide ranges of country under tough conditions. Units lived for weeks on end in the jungle and learnt its ways. We hoped we had finally dispelled the fatal idea that the Japanese had something we had not."⁴⁵ Slim

Yet, important as each of these individual developments were, it was Slim's impact on the morale, confidence and combat effectiveness of the army that would make the difference - he infused the XIV Army with a confidence that they could out maneuver, out march and out fight the Japanese. Bond describes a self-assured, mature commander "... completely free from snobbery or self-importance..." with an easy manner, both charming and humane, possessing a remarkable ability to empathize, relate to, and win the trust of "...all ranks and various nationalities - even Chinese Generals...".⁴⁶ This gift for personal leadership, and communication "...brought a rich

reward in loyalty and affection (which)...goes far to account for his remarkable achievement in creating esprit de corps at Army level".⁴⁷ By the end of the monsoon season, Slim's formations were increasingly patrolling into Japanese controlled areas, feeling out their opponent and preparing for the return of campaigning weather.

The first great test of Slim's newly forged XIV Army would come along the western coast of Southern Burma in February 1944. The Third Arakan Offensive of February 1944, or the 'Battle of the Admin Box' saw each side attempt limited offensive operations to set the conditions for a major push during the dry campaigning weather.⁴⁸ During 1942-43 dry seasons, the Japanese Burma Area Army had decisively defeated two major British offensives along the Arakan, with the most recent triggering wholesale changes to the Allied command structure in the East.

For the Japanese, the limited Ha-Go Offensive in the Arakan had one purpose: to set the conditions for the massive U-Go invasion of Northeastern India by Lieutenant General Renya Mutaguchi's 15 Army.⁴⁹ The Ha-Go operation was a limited advance designed to forestall any British offensive action, deceive in the south, draw in and attrite Slim's reserves, and fatally disperse British defensive preparations around the Imphal plain before Mutaguchi struck.

For the British, Slim was determined to seize the initiative as soon as the weather would allow with limited offensive operations south along the coast to regain contact with the Japanese, penetrate their defensive positions, and seize the critical Akyab island airfields that would enable the full weight of Allied air superiority to be brought to bear throughout Central and Southern Burma.⁵⁰ In many ways the 'Battle of Admin Box' was designed for a newly rebuilt XIV Army to come to grips with its opponent, test its new

tactical operating concept, and solidify gains made through months of planning, preparations and hard training.

By 4 February 1944, the V and VII Indian Divisions of IV Corps under Lieutenant General Geoffrey Scoones advanced deep into Northern Arakan from Chittagong to the Mungdaw-Buthidaung road: the principal battlefields of the abortive 1943 offensive.⁵¹ While IV Corps consolidated in preparation for the advance on Akyab, the Japanese struck. A 6,000 strong-task force, commanded by Commanding General 55 Division Major General Sakurai Tokutaro, infiltrated deep into the British rear and postured for a devastating series of attacks to overwhelm their scattered defensive positions. Moving with speed, the Japanese launched coordinated attacks deep into the British rear area, driving into the seams between the maneuver formations. Slim ordered his surrounded divisions to hold firm, mass their fires, and rely on aerial resupply and medical evacuation. It rapidly became clear to the Japanese High Command that they were no longer fighting the poorly led, and easily panicked British forces of 1942-43.

Throughout the 1943-44 wet season, the XIV Army prepared for just such a fight, and the Third Arakan would prove the first great test of Slim's tactical operating concept the 'defensive box' to dislocate the traditional aggressive enveloping tactics of the Japanese.⁵² When surrounded, the British maneuver formations were trained to assume a tactical defensive box, not unlike the 'infantry squares' of old, and rely on aerial resupply for sustainment and medical evacuation. As these defensive boxes fought furiously to repulse Japanese attacks, they would become 'pivots for maneuver' to enable mobile counterattacks and offensive fires to degrade, and dislocate Japanese attempts to gain positional advantage and isolate them from their sustainment and reinforcement.⁵³

Over the period 6-24 February 1944, repeated attacks by the 'Sakurai Force' targeted the British headquarters and administrative area at Sinzweya, but the 'Admin Box' held, and provided the necessary 'pivot for maneuver' for a devastating counter attack. At the height of the enemy counterattack the Japanese regiments were overstretched, weakened and vulnerable. It is here that Slim first demonstrates masterful coup d'oeil as Army Commander: ruthlessly committing another two fresh divisions from the North, attacking deep into the flank and rear of the overextended Japanese. By late February, the offensive had been crushed with the loss of over 5000 Japanese soldiers. For Slim, XV Corps performance was "...one of the historic successes of British arms", the culmination of months of hard training and preparation:

"For the first time a British force had met, held and decisively defeated a major Japanese attack, and followed this up by driving the enemy out of the strongest possible natural positions that they had been preparing for months and were determined to hold at all costs... It was a victory, a victory about which there could be no argument and its effect, not only on the troops engaged, but on the whole XIV Army, was immense."⁵⁴ Slim

Despite the bitter cost of the Ha-Go Offensive, the Japanese convinced Slim to commit four divisions to a diversion in the Arakan, leaving the IV Corps now widely dispersed, and the defenses of its forward base in the Imphal Plan dangerously weak. By late February 1944, it was becoming increasingly clear to Slim that the Japanese were preparing for a major offensive in Northwest Burma.⁵⁵ The limited Ha-Go operation along the Arakan Coast had been little more than a demonstration to draw in and attrite XIV Army's reserves. The Japanese were preparing to launch an offensive that would devolve into a bitter defensive struggle in mountainous Northwest Burma over the period Mar-Jun 1944, and would test Slim's generalship to its very limits.

The ambitious Japanese U-Go Offensive was designed to forestall the anticipated future Allied offensive towards Central Burma, solidify the Japanese western defensive

perimeter along the border with India, sever the air link with the Chinese, and possibly even trigger an internal revolt against British Rule that would spread throughout the sub-continent.⁵⁶ Commencing in April 1944, the 15th Army commanded by the impulsive and arrogant Lieutenant General Renya Mutaguchi⁵⁷, advanced along two operational axes: two Japanese Divisions would attempt to envelop the dispersed formations of the IV Corps, before seizing the critical forward base on the Imphal Plain and its desperately needed supplies, while the 31st Division advanced over the densely vegetated mountain range of Northwest Burma for the key village of Kohima to sever Imphal from the main logistical and communications node at Dimapur.

To counter this ambitious offensive, Slim's concentrated the IV Corps in a sizeable 'defensive box' at the corps forward base on the Imphal Plain, intent on drawing the Japanese into a battle of attrition where he possessed the decisive advantage in artillery and armor to crush the besieging Japanese forces. The corps-sized 'administrative box' under Lieutenant General Scoones would simplify sustainment and casualty evacuation via air, facilitate the massing of offensive fires, and place the Japanese lines of communications under severe strain. After the XIV Army repulsed the Japanese offensive and greatly weakened the 15th Army, Slim's intent was to ruthlessly exploit to the Chindwin and into Central Burma, despite the monsoon. Slim again demonstrates the operational vision and determination required of a modern *Joint Force Land Component Commander* to seize the initiative, impose his will, and set the conditions for the resumption of offensive operations. Here was the chance that Slim had been waiting for, an opportunity to severely weaken the Burma Area Army on ground of his own choosing at the very end of Mutaguchi's lines of communications.

Slim's plan was simple and ruthless. Firstly, he set the conditions for his corps commanders to concentrate their force in large defensive boxes to negate the traditional Japanese techniques of infiltration and envelopment, then press their advantage in armor and artillery to grind down the Japanese offensives. As the fight progresses each defensive box was sustained with aerial resupply, parachute drop, or infiltration by flying in enormous quantities of combat supplies and reinforcements, then evacuating casualties or extracting non-essential personnel. As each garrison fought furiously, Slim massed overwhelming offensive fires to degrade the enemy into their operational depth, while preparing a powerful counter-attack based on XXXIII Corps under Lieutenant General Stopford to fight its way south along the Imphal-Dimapur track to break the siege and rout the invaders. Slim articulated his intent for the defense of Northern India:

“...to meet the Japanese on ground of our own choosing, with a better line of communications behind us than behind them, to concentrate against them superior forces drawn from Arakan and India, to wear them down, and, when they were exhausted, to turn and destroy them”⁵⁸ Slim

Slim's design placed considerable faith in the subordinate leadership of his Army, the air support of the Allied Eastern Air Command under Major General Stratemeyer, and the revitalized fighting power of his Army to hold and repulse a desperate Japanese. Timing of withdrawal out of Arakan would be everything. Slim faced a critical command decision about when to concentrate the IV Corps, which had been widely dispersed after the Ha-Go Offensive: the XVII Indian Division at Tiddim, XX Indian Division at Tamu, with the XXIII Indian Division at Imphal. Premature withdrawal would alert the Japanese, and possibly prevent them from advancing towards the decisive battle beyond the attackers supply capacity.⁵⁹ If Slim withdrew these Divisions too late, they would be isolated and destroyed piecemeal. At Kohima and Dimapur, Slim was convinced that the

most the Japanese could mass against Kohima across the mountains was a regimental sized group, and a small garrison would suffice.⁶⁰

The Japanese offensive started early on the 4 March, not 15 March 1944 as anticipated. The initial clashes showed Slim's overall plan to be sound, but betrayed two glaring miscalculations.⁶¹ Slim made the critical mistake of leaving the decision of when to concentrate IV Corps to its commander Scoones, when the entire operational scheme rested on this critical decision. Additionally, as he would admit after the war he was in a much better position to judge the overall situation than Scoones, and knew him to be cautious and deliberate.⁶² In the opening days of the Offensive, the XVII Indian Division was isolated and almost cut off seventy miles south of Imphal on the Tiddum road, but was fortunate to fight its way clear and concentrate at Imphal. Fifty miles to the east of Imphal, the XX Indian Division fought a fierce fighting withdrawal along road from Tamu and was also able to concentrate at Imphal.⁶³ Disaster was averted when Mountbatten unilaterally commandeered Air Transport assets dedicated to flying the 'Hump Route' in order to airlift the V Indian Division from Arakan into Imphal, including all its personnel, artillery, mules, and transport.⁶⁴

Even more serious was Slim's underestimation of how much combat power Mutaguchi could mass against Kohima in an attempt to sever the vital road link from Dimapur, and isolate the IV Corps at Imphal.⁶⁵ The entire 31 Division under Lieutenant General Sato would besiege a tiny garrison the size of an understrength brigade from 3-16 April that would come to be described as the 'Stalingrad of the East', before they could be relieved by British II Division.⁶⁶ By 29 March the vital road link to Imphal had been cut, and the defenders isolated. It took another two months of bitter fighting to drive the

Japanese back over the Chindwin. Mutaguchi's plan revealed a contemptuous underestimation for the fighting power of the XIV Army, in addition to dangerously inadequate logistic preparations, operational inflexibility, and a refusal to face the situation on the ground as it began to deteriorate.⁶⁷

Slim took ruthless advantage of the Japanese commander's arrogance, inadequate preparations and miscalculations, proving himself a consummate defensive commander. Calm, determined and constantly forward, Slim confidently responded to a series of crisis across his front. As Lewin observes:

"During these tumultuous days Slim's tensile strength was tested to the limit, by strain beneath which most men's metal would have snapped. The mere physical stress was enormous - shuttling in uncomfortable aircraft between his widespread commands... Then there was the moral effort, exacted by the constant need to appear calm and unconcerned... Remarkable in his ability to carry these two burdens, Slim also revealed one of the commander's highest gifts - the capacity to grip a battle which is manifestly running his enemy's way, and by fresh dispositions so to alter the pattern of the conflict that the enemy, in the end, is dancing to his own tune."⁶⁸

As the bitter defensive fighting wore on, Slim gradually mastered the Japanese and made the decisive operational choice, one of great moral courage: patiently focusing his Army not on relieving his desperately besieged garrisons, but on maintaining contact with the Japanese in order to inflict as much damage as possible on Mutaguchi's 15 Army. Throughout the siege, XIV Army's main effort remained resolutely focused on destroying Japanese combat power, then preparing for exploitation of an overstretched and severely weakened opponent. During the bitter defensive fighting of April-May 1944, Slim exhibits all the hallmarks of the ideal modern *Joint Force Land Component Commander*. Focused on the wider campaign context, under immense physical and psychological strain, Slim holds firm to his operational vision, and demands desperate sacrifices from his army to set the conditions to destroy his opponent, then exploit deep into Central Burma.

Throughout the bitter defensive fighting, despite heavy casualties and ominous situational updates, Slim showed generalship of the highest order, displaying great moral courage, operational vision and ruthless determination. His constant 'vital presence' as he flew throughout his command, demonstrating considerable physical stamina and personal leadership as he sustained his beleaguered garrisons, massed fires, oversaw a massive aerial sustainment effort, and initiated the deliberate counteroffensive that relieved Kohima by late April, then IV Corps in Imphal by the start of June.⁶⁹

By 22 June 1944, the II Division and V Indian Division linked-up on the Kohima-Imphal Road signaling an end to the Japanese offensive. U-Go would be an unmitigated disaster for the Japanese Burma Area Army, with over 60,000 casualties, and the loss of most of its heavy equipment, especially its artillery and transportation assets.⁷⁰ As the survivors staggered back into Burma over the monsoon suffering from disease, malnutrition, and combat losses, Slim wasted no time in exploiting his success and advancing to the Chindwin.⁷¹

Slim's performance as Army Commander during the dual Ha-Go/U-Go Offensives demonstrates a defensive commander at the very height of his powers. The British defense of Assam validated Slim as an expert trainer who rebuilt a shattered army, engendered resolute tactical leadership, and revitalized morale. The constant flow of supplies and reinforcements, and the sustained operational fires showed an operational commander of considerable administrative skill. Slim's calm determination, trust in his subordinate commanders, and operational patience allowed the Japanese to become decisively committed at the very end of their supply lines deep in the rugged Naga Hills of Northwest Burma. Slim displayed great moral courage, merciless determination, and

considerable faith in his army. Throughout the unremitting Japanese offensive, Slim embodies the qualities, and attributes required of the modern *Joint Force Land Component Commander*. He endured repeated crisis, remained firm to his operational vision, and demonstrated great tactical patience allowing the 15th Army to smash itself to pieces against his well led, and determined Army. Then, as Mutaguchi's situation fell apart, Slim massed both the IV and XXXIII Corps to degrade a badly overextended Japanese force, and deliver a decisive counteroffensive, which quickly developed into a devastating rout to destroy the 15th Army.

The XIV Army's dramatic success in Northwest Burma was far from clear as the Allies prepared for the 1945 campaign season.⁷² The objectives that the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee had issued to Mountbatten in July 1944 had been overtaken by events.⁷³ Slim now had a window of opportunity to advance into Central Burma, and close with the severely weakened Japanese forces, before they could reconstitute and develop a potent defensive line centered on the eastern banks of the Chindwin River. In August 1944, Mountbatten submitted a much more ambitious plan, developed primarily by Slim and his staff, to Field Marshal Alanbrooke and the British Chiefs of Staff.

Stressing the need to exploit the Japanese defeat at Imphal, Mountbatten proposed two concepts: Operation CAPITAL developed by Slim, would see an advance by the XIV Army and Chinese forces of Northern Combat Area Command to the line Lashio-Mandalay-Pakokku, with the primary operational objective of forcing the Japanese Army into a decisive battle on the Swebo plains.⁷⁴ Operation CAPITAL was assessed by the SEAC staff as achievable within Slim's limited resources in theatre. Additionally, Mountbatten proposed Operation DRACULA developed by his own staff, intended as an

ambitious combined airborne/amphibious assault to seize Rangoon by *coup de main*, then push north to link up with XIV Army fixing Japanese in Central Burma.⁷⁵ DRACULA required significant additional resources, principally shipping and amphibious landing craft. By the conclusion of the 'Octagon' Conference in September 1944, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and the CCS gave tepid approval to both plans – though no commitments were given to supply the additional resources.⁷⁶

During the July 1944 'Dehra Dun' conference, Slim presided over a "...collaborative discussion" with his subordinate commanders and XIV Army staff exploring the opportunities, and risks inherent to the operational situation following the defeat of the Japanese U-GO Offensive.⁷⁷ In a series of design discourses during the 'Dehra Dun' conference, Slim and his team lay the foundation for Operation CAPITAL: The invasion of Burma, and the destruction of the Japanese Burma Area Army. Subordinates describe Slim presiding over a collegial, robust discourse '...that involved the whole intellectual horsepower of his staff...' developing an operational approach to sustain the XIV Army's advance over the thickly vegetated mountains of Assam, across the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers, to mass combat power on the Shwebo Plain and destroy the Japanese Army Group.⁷⁸ Slim's command technique exemplifies the simple, robust command-driven design methodology required of a contemporary *Joint Force Land Component Commander* in action:

"Commanders conferences were not unlike 'post-graduate university seminars', with Slim as Chairman, guiding but not dominating discussion... a natural democrat, sparing no pains to elicit from his subordinates a full spectrum of opinions about any important problem... Consequently, Slim was the first to agree that the plan eventually arrived at for the advance into Burma was the product of his headquarters as a whole."⁷⁹

For the Japanese Burma Area Army, the failure of U-Go would result in wholesale changes to the chain of command: on 30 August 1944, Lieutenant General

Kimura Hyotaro replaced Kawbe as Commanding General of the Army Group, while Lieutenant General Katamura Shihachi replaced Mutaguchi as Commanding General 15th Army.⁸⁰ By November, Imperial High Command had issued new strategic guidance to Kimura: that he must hold Southern Burma at all costs, and do so with the resources already at his disposal - there would be no additional reinforcements.⁸¹

Kimura, desperate to retain control of the oil fields at Yenangyaung, and the rice growing area of the Irrawaddy Delta to sustain his force, had three small armies (28th in Arakan, 15th in center, and 33rd in east), with approximately 250,000 soldiers to hold the line from Lashio-Mandalay-Yenangyaung to the Ramree Islands on Burmese Coast.⁸² All Kimura's eight divisions were severely understrength, and had lost much of their organic transport and artillery in U-Go. He was also operating under conditions of complete air inferiority, and had little to contest Allied dominance in the coming months. While Slim initially thought that Kimura was demonstrating a far more flexible and pragmatic approach than his predecessors, in actuality Kimura's orders forced him to withdraw South of the Irrawaddy.⁸³

Kimura's plan for what he had come to call the "Battle of Irrawaddy Shore" was simple: withdraw his armies into a defensive line on the southern banks of the Irrawaddy River, forcing the XIV Army into an opposed river crossing at the limits of their line of communications, and the very edge of their aircraft's range. As the British advanced on Mandalay, Kimura hope to nullify their strength by massing his combat power on the weak British bridgeheads, and negate Slim's material advantage by forcing his already weakened divisions into a steady battle of attrition, and leave them vulnerable to Japanese counterattack. After initial success, Kimura's intent was to exploit to, and restore the

Japanese perimeter up to the Chindwin River, possibly even the border with India itself. Kimura's operational scheme concentrated his force on the Central Burma Front, accepting risk along the Eastern and Arakan fronts. On 1 December 1944, Kimura ordered all Japanese units south of the Irrawaddy, and began to prepare his force for the coming offensive.⁸⁴

Unbeknownst to Slim, in one swift move the withdrawal of the Japanese south of the Irrawaddy had dislocated the Operation CAPITAL concept of operations, however for the Japanese it proved impossible to disguise.⁸⁵ The speed and ease of XIV Army's Chindwin River crossing, and the relatively insignificant Japanese rearguards were made it clear to Slim that Kimura had no intention of contesting Northern Burma, and that his intention was to make a stand on the southern banks of the Irrawaddy. Operation CAPITAL saw XIV Army's two corps (IV and XXXIII) advance on a broad sweep into the Swebo plains with the IV Corps on left following the Irrawaddy, and the XXXIII Corps on the right, placing pressure on the Japanese from all sides. As they advanced on Mandalay, the XIV Army would close with the Japanese, whose backs would be against the Irrawaddy, then rout them.

Slim's plan had been based on the then-sound assumption that the last thing the Japanese would want to do is willingly give up ground, but as his vanguard, the XIX Indian Division of Messervy's IV Corps advanced from the Chindwin, Slim was growing increasingly suspicious, and by 16 December 1944 it was clear that the Japanese had withdrawn.⁸⁶ Over the next 48 hours, without consultation with higher headquarters, Slim designed, planned and issued orders for a complete shift in the Army design for battle, his operational masterpiece: Operation EXTENDED CAPITAL.⁸⁷

"Slim's unhesitating switch of plan to Operation EXTENDED CAPITAL in mid December 1944, his acceptance of the administrative and tactical risks that this entailed, and his command of every nuance of the 1945 offensive as it unfolded showed him to be the consummate master of war."⁸⁸

Operation EXTENDED CAPITAL was designed to convince the Japanese that Slim remained focused on seizing Mandalay.⁸⁹ Attaching the XIX Indian Division to XXXIII Corps and establishing a dummy IV Corps headquarters near Swebo to establish radio deception, the XXXIII Corps pushed hard for bridgeheads to the north and west of Mandalay. As the Japanese focused on the threat of XXXIII Corps' advance, the remaining elements of IV Corps secretly displaced 100 miles to the west. Then over the next two months, IV Corps infiltrated slowly under strict radio silence down a muddy 150 mile bullock track from Kalemio-Kan-Gangaw-Tilin to Pakkoku on the Irrawaddy, 50 miles southwest of the main Japanese defensive positions in and around Mandalay. After a river crossing at Pakkoku, the XVII Indian Division would advance 50 miles to secure the main communications and logistic node at Meiktila, well behind the Japanese main defensive line.⁹⁰

Over the period 12-13 February 1945, Slim achieved remarkable simultaneity across the XIV Army front as the XXXIII Corps forced heavily contested river crossings on 12 February, drawing Kimura's attention to north-northeast. On the 13 February, IV Corps forced the Irrawaddy to the west of Meiktila against negligible opposition, and by 4 March 1945 had secured Meiktila and its critical airfield. Kimura realized his mistake too late. Already fighting furiously against the bridgeheads of the advancing XXXIII Corps and hard pressed to hold Mandalay – the Japanese rushed two divisions (18th/49th) south to retake Meiktila, reopen his lines of communication and secure his rear area. Over the period 15-29 Mar 1945, two separate battles developed for control of Central Burma – the XIX Indian Division's vicious urban fight for Mandalay, and the XVII Indian

Division aggressive defense of Meiktila.⁹¹ Slim's manoeuvrist plan had shocked, dislocated and then destroyed the Japanese Burma Area Army.⁹² By late March, the remnants of the Burma Area Army fled south in confusion along the Irrawaddy toward Rangoon.

Just as he had done after the decisive defensive victory in Assam, Slim ruthlessly exploited his masterstroke at Meiktila. Over the period April-May 1945, XIV Army raced the monsoon, as Slim's spearheads drove south to rout the retreating Japanese.⁹³ In a devastating pursuit, Slim leveraged the superior leadership, training and material advantages of his Army in combined arms warfare, as his divisions leapfrogged towards Rangoon, isolating and reducing pockets of Japanese resistance or simply overwhelming them. The monsoon broke two weeks early on 2 May, while Slim's lead elements were still 50 miles north of the city. It would matter little, Operation DRACULA had been revitalized as Slim's success in Central Burma became apparent and the XXVI Indian Division landed unopposed at the Rangoon Docks to find the capital empty of Japanese. On 6 May 1945, the XIV Army would finally link up north of Rangoon, and the campaign for Burma was over.⁹⁴

As Army Commander, Field Marshal Slim proved the 'complete' general', exemplifying the flexibility, determination, maturity and professional expertise required of a modern *Joint Force Land Component Commander*.⁹⁵ Calm and determined, physically robust, and possessed of considerable moral courage, he endured constant crisis and enormous pressure throughout the longest British campaign of the war. His army inflicted the most devastating defeat the Japanese suffered on land, in a theater with the lowest strategic priority, across the most inhospitable terrain and with little politico-

strategic support for his vision. Facing almost insurmountable odds, Slim crafted an ambitious, yet carefully thought out, practical and sustainable operational vision for not simply defending the Indian border, but destroying the Japanese Burma Area Army and winning the war in Burma.

Throughout the monsoon of 1943-44, Slim rebuilt a shattered and demoralized army, infusing it with a unique identity and renewed confidence, proving to be a highly skilled administrative leader and expert trainer. As operational artist, Slim's campaign design was both bold and deeply pragmatic, reflecting his extensive professional expertise and experience. Slim possessed an intuitive understanding of the terrain, the opponent, and the strengths and weaknesses of his instrument: the XIV Army. Slim repeatedly turned the strengths of the Japanese against them: first to deceive, then degrade and weaken, before exploiting ruthlessly. He repeatedly took advantage of traditional Japanese weaknesses: operational inflexibility; a contempt and underestimation for British soldiers; the bravado, arrogance, and the reckless disregard for adequate logistic preparations of their commanders; the inherent tensions in the Japanese command chain; and their almost complete air inferiority. This deep understanding underpins Slim's unswerving operational approach: first to deceive and overextend, then outmaneuver an overly aggressive and ill-prepared Japanese counter. When positional advantage had been achieved, Slim massed his combined joint combat power to degrade, disrupt, and finally destroy the Japanese Burma Area Army's will to continue to fight.

During the defense of Assam, Slim proved a superb defensive commander. Recovering after initial operational setbacks, he calmly accepted considerable risk as the

Japanese advanced deep into Assam, surrounding and besieging his most important corps. Enduring considerable physical strain, Slim circulated across the front throughout the crisis, calmly and confidently setting the conditions for his army to mass, overextend and grind down the Japanese, then counterattack to devastating effect. Throughout he was able to establish a climate of trust, leaving the critical decisions to his subordinates while laying the foundations to exploit their success. Slim demonstrated a detailed understanding of his adversary, informing his campaign design and displaying the central importance he placed on surprise and shock. Successive Japanese commanders repeatedly found themselves out-thought, deceived and out-maneuvered, as Slim gained positional advantage and brought decisive local superiority to bear.

In XIV Army's deftly handled advance into Central Burma culminating in his masterpiece at Meiktila, Slim proved the rival of any offensive commander of the war. Developing a masterful plan that hinged on an elaborate operational deception, Slim was able to fix the attention of the Japanese to Mandalay, then infiltrate an entire corps deep into their operational depth along the seam between two Japanese Armies, seize the critical logistic and communications node at Meiktila, and set the conditions for the destruction of the Burma Area Army. At the very end of his lines of communications, the XIV Army conducted two massive opposed river crossings, rapidly concentrating sufficient combat power to leverage the Japanese out of their defensive lines, to destroy them on ground of his choosing. Throughout the battle, Slim set the conditions for his hard fighting corps by ensuring the flow of desperately needed combat supplies, integrating operational fires, and driving the detailed planning for an immediate pursuit,

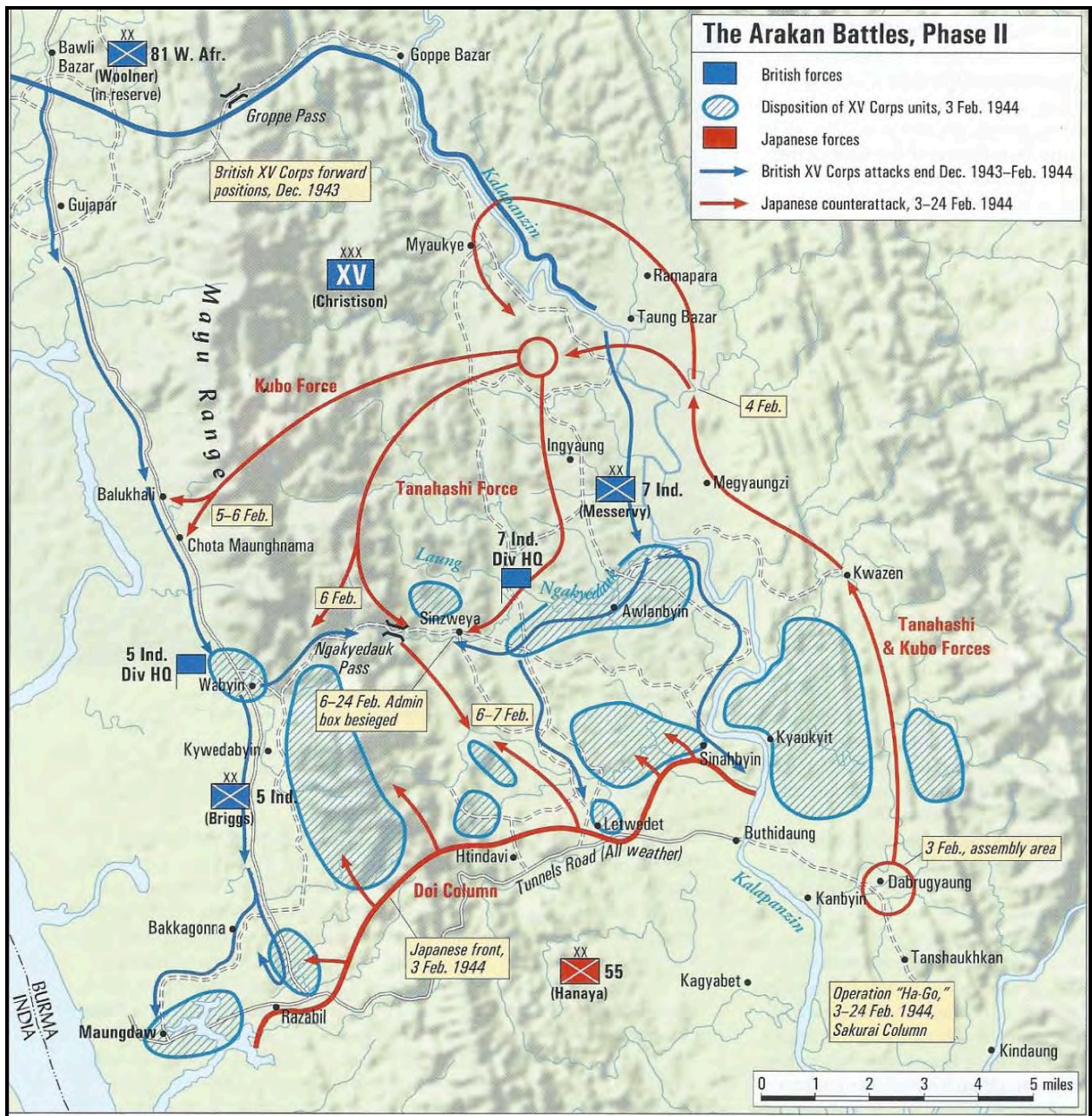
setting the conditions for the rout of the retreating Japanese, and the seizure of Rangoon, before monsoonal rains made the road network untenable.

To Mountbatten, Slim was "the finest general the Second World War produced", for Wingate "...the finest man, bar Wavell, east of Suez".⁹⁶ Even notorious Anglophobe "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell held Slim in high esteem remarking "...he was not afraid of anything", and gifting him a U.S. M1 Carbine Slim carried throughout the war.⁹⁷ Major General Ouvry Roberts, one of his divisional commanders at Imphal, described Slim as not just "the finest British General of World War II... (but) also the most humble."⁹⁸ To his soldiers, Slim is remembered fondly as the "indomitable and unshaken..." Uncle Bill, the consummate soldiers general.⁹⁹ As one member of his staff remarked: "He was a great leader - true; he was a great commander - true; but to us he was, above all, a well-loved friend of the family".¹⁰⁰ In the truest indication of his achievements, after the war Slim replaced Field Marshal Montgomery as Chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1948, one of only a handful of British Indian Army Officers to have held this prestigious post. Then-Prime Minister Clement Attlee described his new C.I.G.S. as "first class... the best anybody has", as he navigated the British Army through such diverse post-war challenges as Korea, Palestine, East Africa, and Malaya.¹⁰¹

Field Marshal Viscount William Slim's generalship as GOC XIV Army in the Burma Theater ranks him as arguably the foremost practitioner of operational art during the Second World War. The 'complete' general, Slim combined great powers of leadership, with a unique operational vision, and deep professional expertise and experience. Slim proved an expert trainer, a master of planning, staff work and administration, and a ruthless combat leader through all phases of war: from the limited

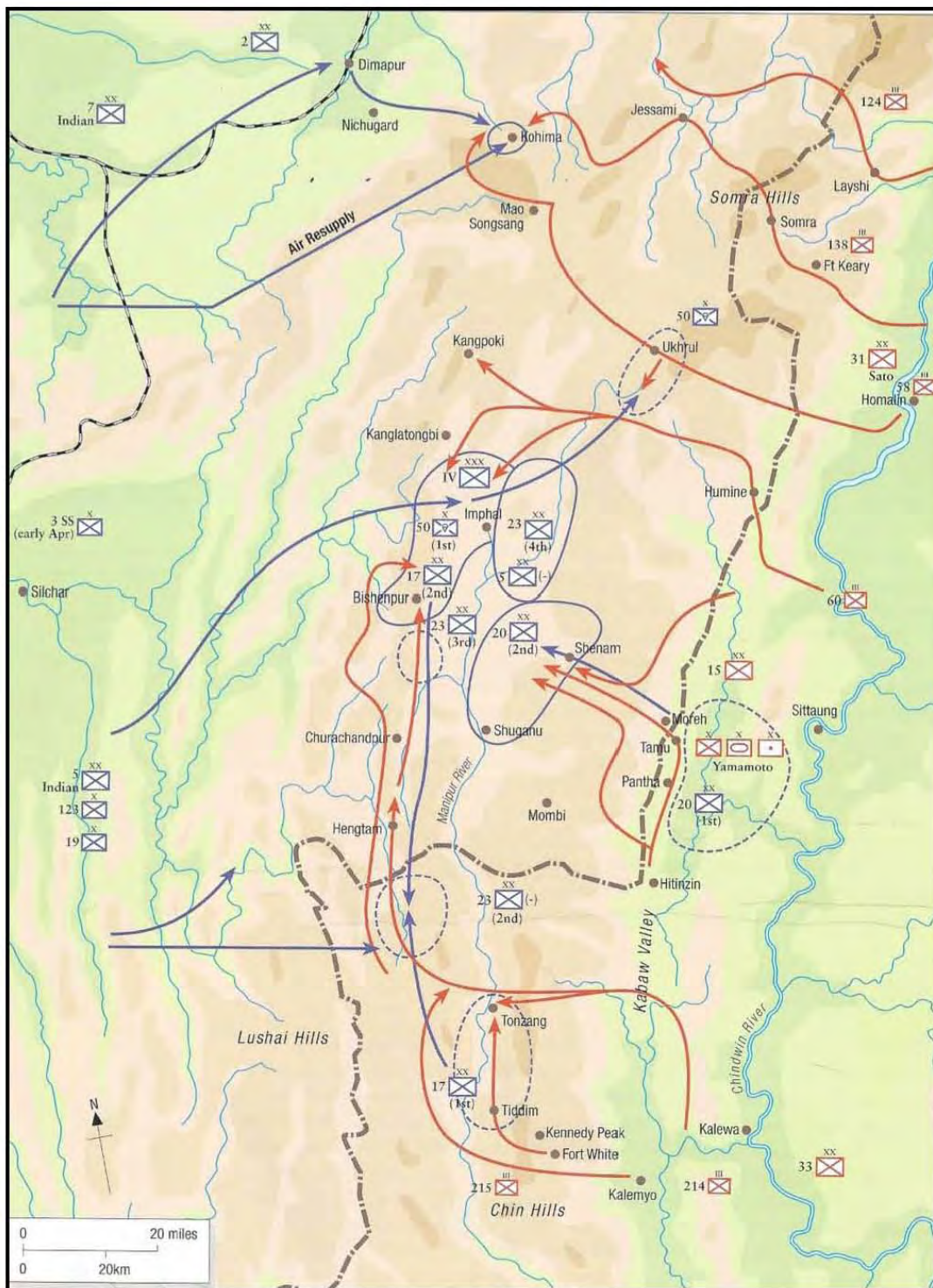
operations of the Arakan; the bitter defensive struggles of Imphal-Kohima; the advance and twin offensive battles of Meiktila; to the exploitation to Rangoon.

For contemporary practitioners, in Slim's performance as Army Commander demonstrates the mature realization of the modern construct of *Joint Force Land Component Commander*, and a revealing leadership study in the most demanding conditions. Under great physical and moral strain, Slim calmly and stoically outthought, outmaneuvered, and outfought his enemy. A master of administration, logistics and staffwork, an expert trainer, a trusting and supportive commander, and an operational artist of unique skill and vision, Slim's generalship in Burma over the period 1943-45 retains enduring relevance for the study of command at the operational level of war.



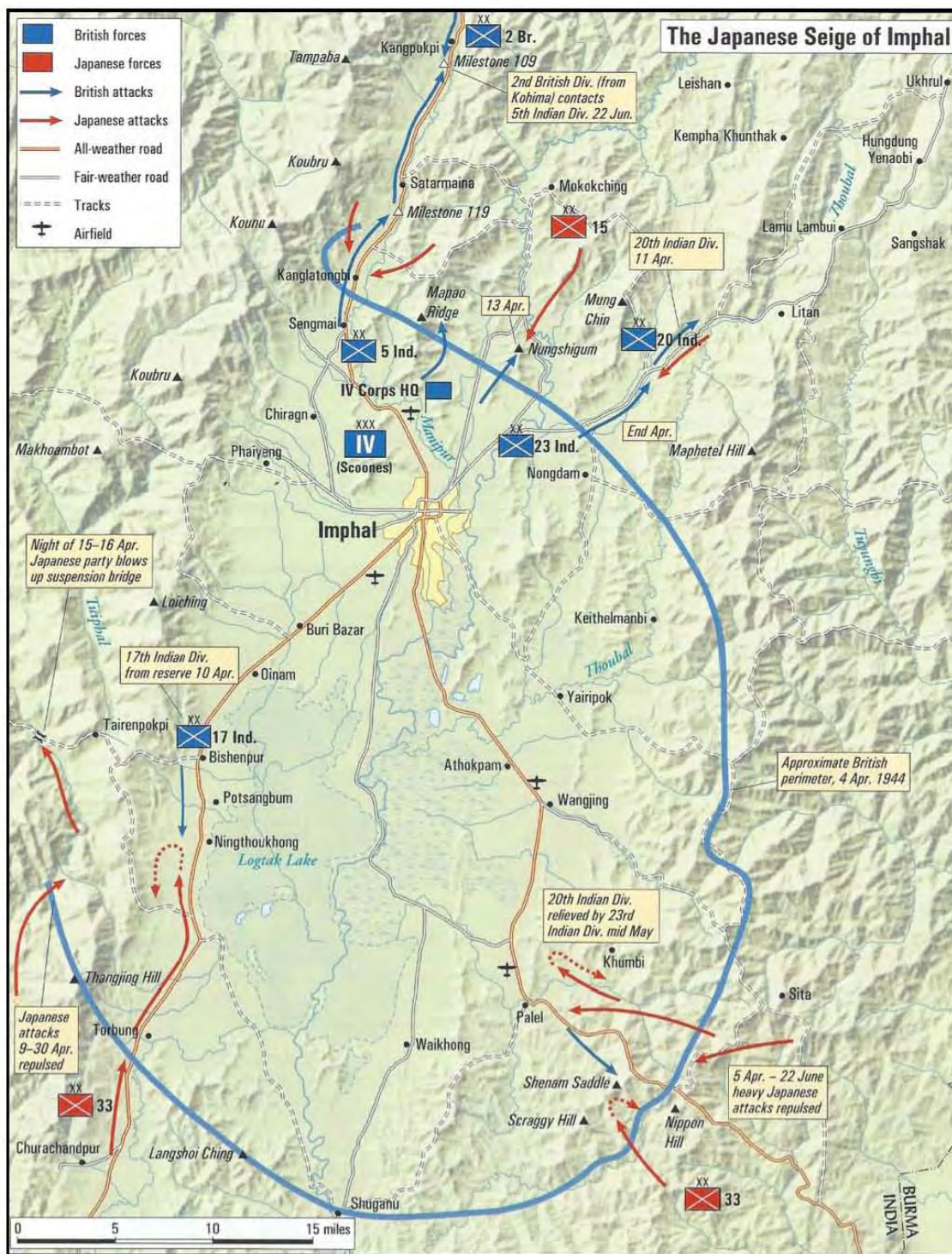
Map 1 - Allied Arakan Offensive and Japanese Operation *Ha-Go*
February 1944

Source: William Stroock. "Green Hell: Battle for Burma", in *World at War*, No. 28, March 2013
(Bakersfield, CA: Decision Games, 2013), 10.



Map 2 - Japanese Operation U-Go
Invasion of Northeast India
March-June 1944

Source: Robert Lyman. *Kohima 1944: The Battle that Saved India*. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 26.

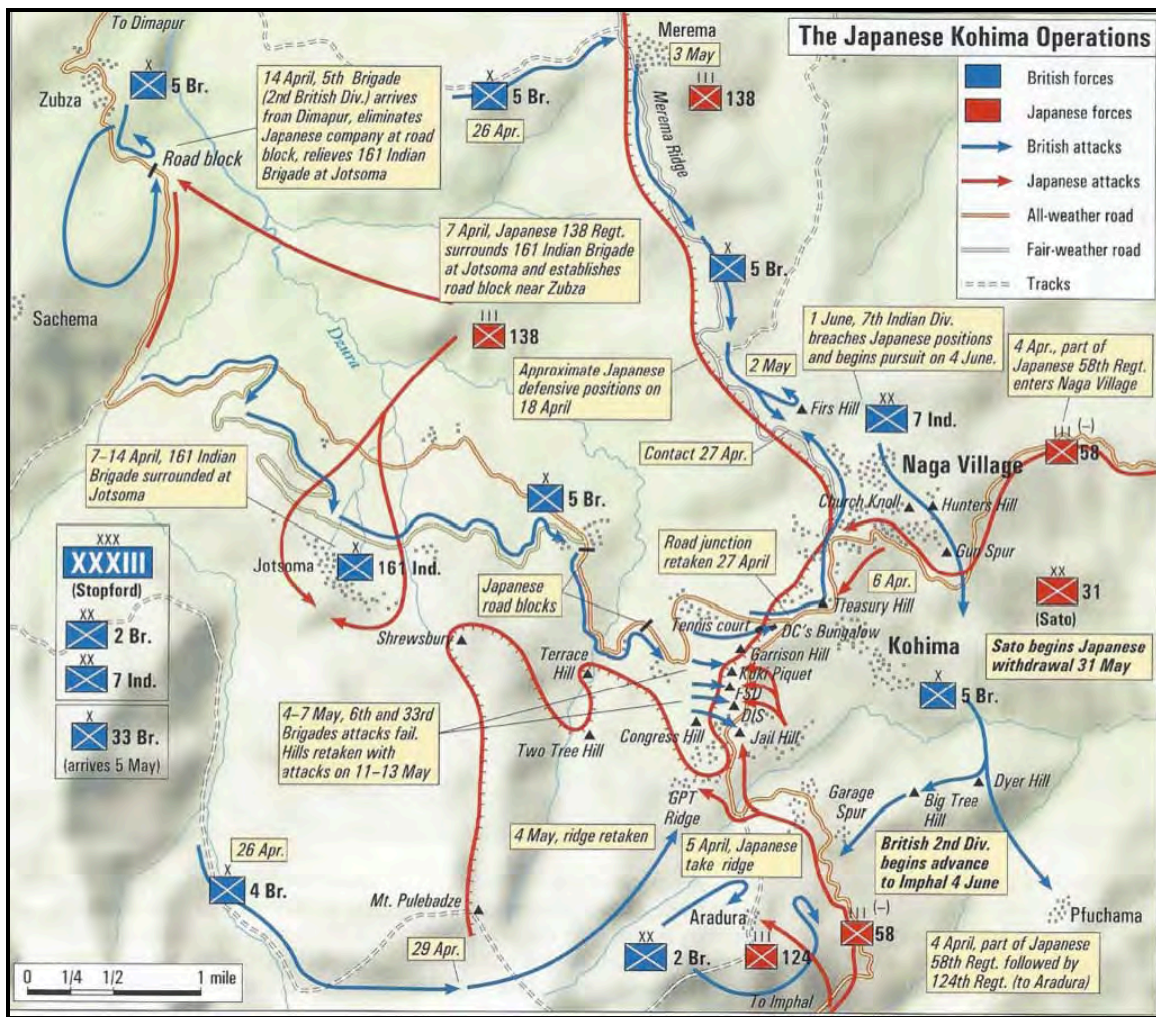


Map 3 - Japanese Operation U-Go

Imphal Front

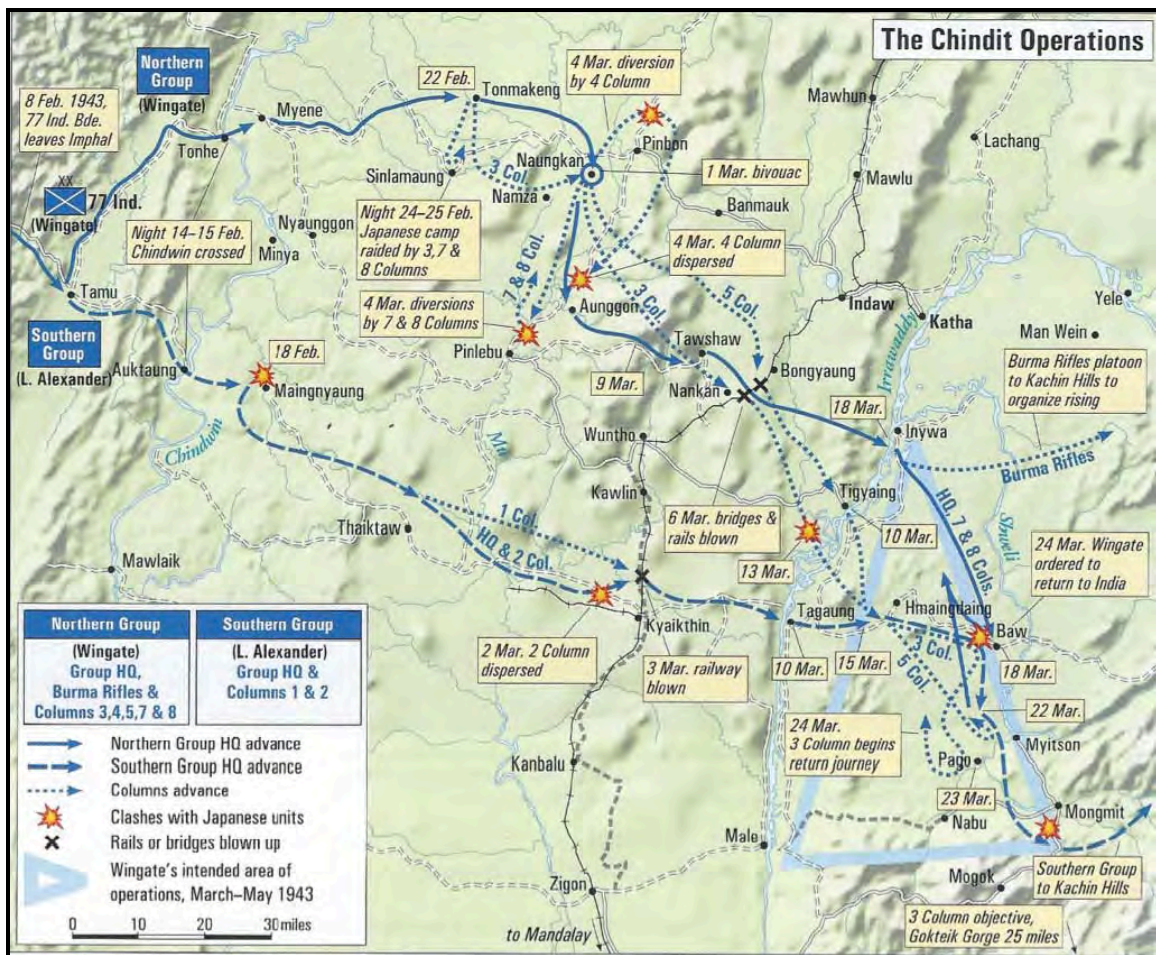
Siege of Imphal - March-June 1944

Source: William Stroock. "Green Hell: Battle for Burma", in *World at War*, No. 28, March 2013 (Bakersfield, CA: Decision Games, 2013), 12.



Map 4 - Japanese Operation U-Go
Kohima-Dimapur Front
Siege of Kohima - March-June 1944

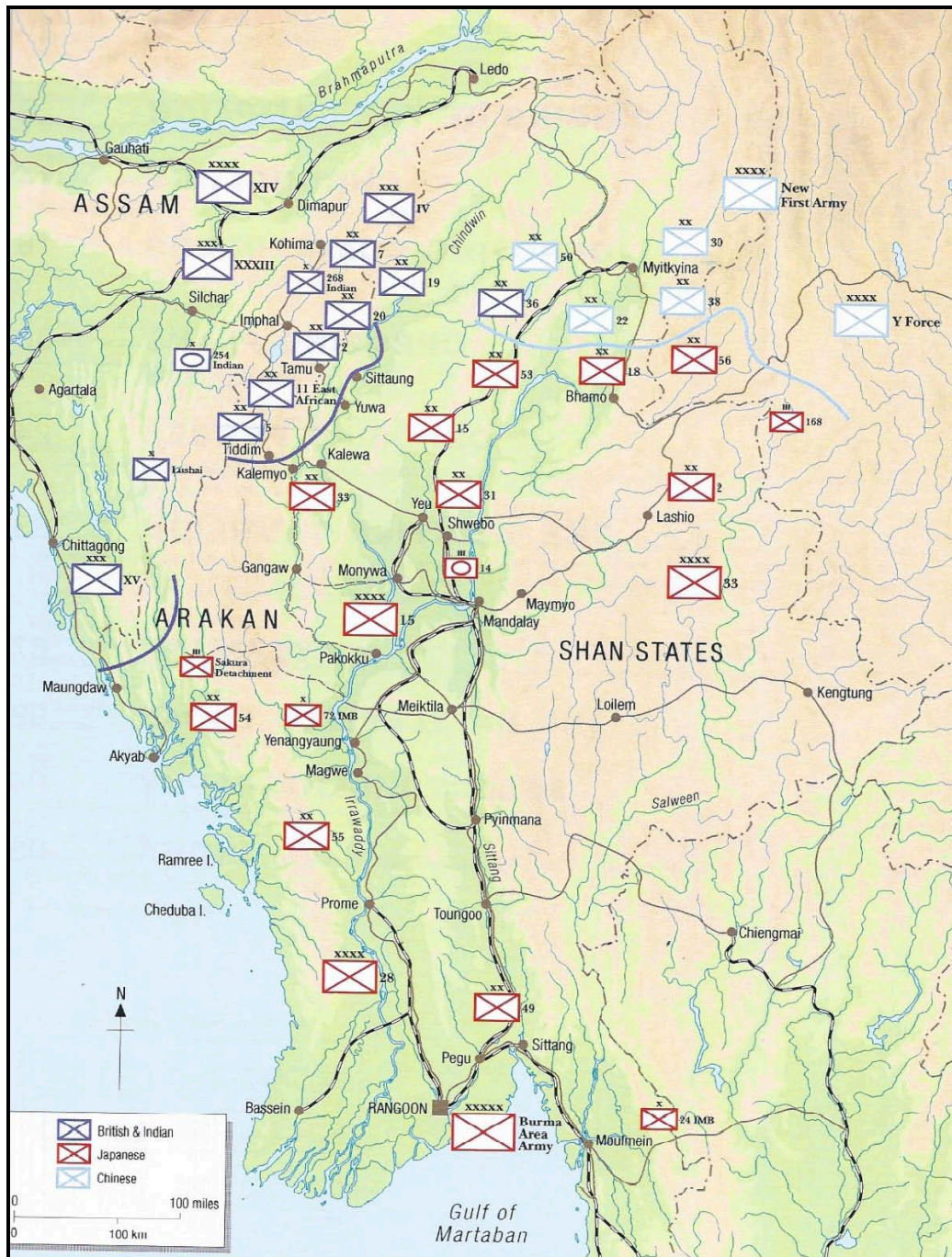
Source: William Stroock. "Green Hell: Battle for Burma", in *World at War*, No. 28, March 2013 (Bakersfield, CA: Decision Games, 2013), 11.



Map 5 - Allied Special Operations in Burma 1943

Chindit Campaign's March-May 1943

Source: William Stroock. "Green Hell: Battle for Burma", in *World at War*, No. 28, March 2013 (Bakersfield, CA: Decision Games, 2013), 13.



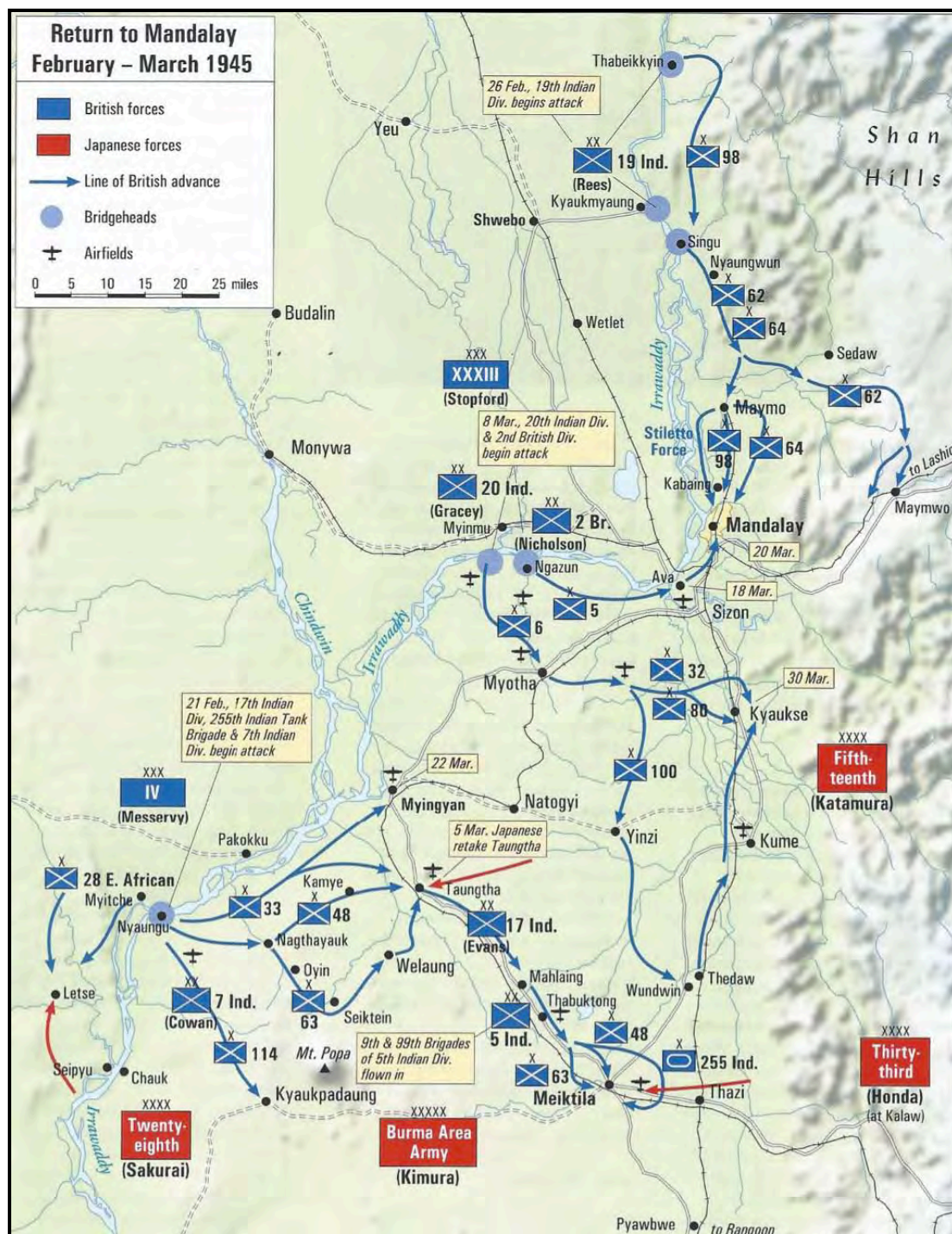
Map 6 - Burma Front November 1944

Situation as XIV Army prepare to invade Burma following monsoon

Note: This map details minor exploitation operations in the aftermath failed Japanese U-Go Offensive: British XXXIII Corps advance to Chindwin River on Central Front, and Chinese New First Army advance to secure Myitkyina on Northern Front

Chinese New First Army advance to secure Myitkyina on Northern Front

Source: Edward M Young. *Meiktila 1945: The Battle to Liberate Burma* (Oxford: Osprey, 2009), 6.

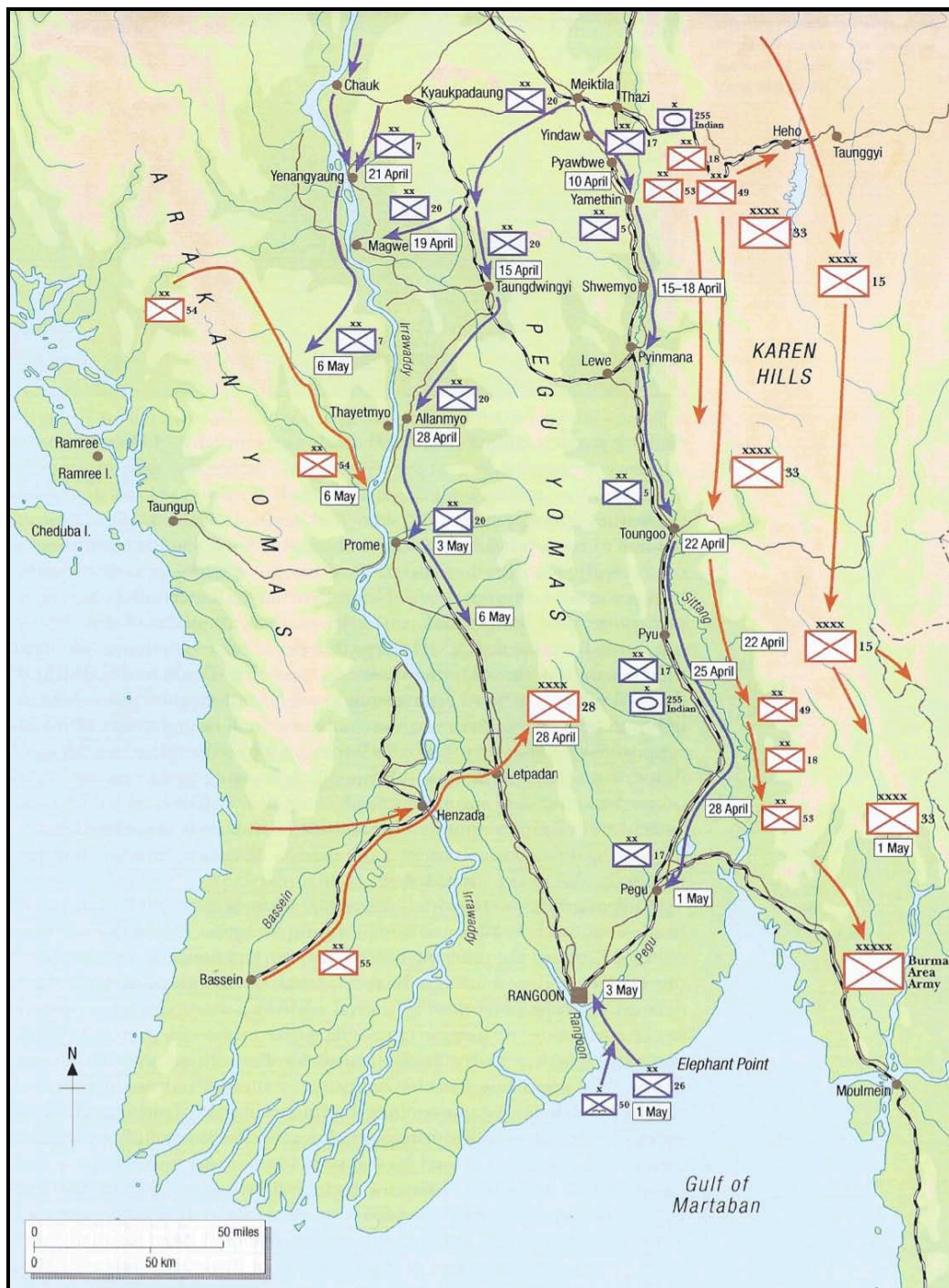


Map 8 - Operation Extended Capital culminates

Allied destruction of Japanese Burma Area Army

Battle of Meitkla-Mandalay - February-March 1945

Source: William Stroock, "Green Hell: Battle for Burma", in *World at War*, No. 28, March 2013 (Bakersfield, CA: Decision Games, 2013), 17.



Map 9 - Pursuit to Rangoon

Allied exploitation and amphibious coup de main to seize Rangoon

April-May 1945

Source: Edward M Young. *Meiktila 1945: The Battle to Liberate Burma* (Oxford: Osprey, 2009), 90.

Endnotes

- ¹ Richard Dannatt. "Bill Slim was an Inspiration - The Greatest of our Generals", in Telegraph online, 8 Apr 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/8436002/Bill-Slim-was-an-inspiration-and-the-greatest-of-our-generals.html> (accessed 10 Aug 2012).
- ² Dannatt. "Operational art is the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organization, sequencing and direction of campaigns and major operations. The essence of operational art lies in being able to produce the right combination of effects, in time and space, and purpose to neutralize, weaken, defeat or destroy an enemy's center of gravity." ADDP 5.0 Joint Planning, p. 3-1
- ³ U.S. Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 3-31: Command and Control for Joint Land Operations*. Washington D.C.: Joint Staff, 23 March 2004; U.S. Department of Defense. *Joint Force Land Component Commanders Handbook - Coordination Draft*. 1 June 2005; and, United States Army War College. "Joint Force Land Component Commanders Course: Course Overview", presentation. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 26 February 2006), 2. Often portrayed as responsible for the 'day to day' running of operations within a given theater, today's JFLCC is responsible to plan, prepare, and execute land operations that support theatre commanders accomplish strategic objectives, execute theater-wide and multinational integrating functions, and conduct sustained land-dominance operations to defeat enemy efforts and stabilize conditions through coalition land actions within a complex multinational, interagency, intergovernmental, and international context, as well as regional/global media environments.
- ⁴ For ease of differentiation, formations of the British Army will be indicated using Roman numerals (XIV Army, IV Corps, XVII Division), while Japanese units will be indicated using normal numerical designators. See Lyman, Robert. *The Generals: From Defeat to Victory, Leadership in Asia 1941-45*. (London: Constable, 2008), 294-333.
- ⁵ Ronald Lewin. *Slim: The Standardbearer* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1999), 192.
- ⁶ S. Woodburn Kirby. *History of the Second World War, The United Kingdom Military Series - War Against Japan Volume II: India's Most Dangerous Hour*. (East Sussex: Navy and Military Press, 1961), 199-210.
- ⁷ Slim, 1956, 102-125.
- ⁸ Graham Dunlop. *Military Economics, Culture and Logistics in the Burma Campaign 1942-1945*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 62.
- ⁹ Frank McLynn. *The Burma Campaign: Disaster into Triumph 1942-45*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 165-178, and John Latimer. *Burma: The Forgotten War*. (London: John Ives, 2004), 125.
- ¹⁰ Robert Lyman. Slim, Master of War. (London: Robinson Publishing, 2005), 117-118.
- ¹¹ Latimer, 31-32.
- ¹² Dunlop, 2-3.
- ¹³ Dunlop, 3.
- ¹⁴ Louis Allen. *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45*. (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), .
- ¹⁵ Latimer, 176-178.
- ¹⁶ See William Slim. *Defeat into Victory*. (London: Pan Books, 2009 reprint 1956), 193-194.
- ¹⁷ Dunlop, 1-5.
- ¹⁸ James B. Wood. *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 28.
- ¹⁹ Wood.
- ²⁰ Brian Bond, and Kyoichi Tachikawa, eds. *British and Japanese Military Leadership in the Far Eastern War 1941-1945*. (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 33-4, and 106.
- ²¹ Kirby, Vol. III, Ch. IV.
- ²² See Robert Lyman. *Japan's Last Bid for Victory: The Invasion of India, 1944*. (London: Pen and Sword, 2011), 14-16.
- ²³ Bond, 47; and Slim, 1956, 234-235.
- ²⁴ Kirby, Vol. II, 381.
- ²⁵ See Geoffrey Evans. "Slim" in *The War Lords: Military Commanders of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Michael Carver, 375-389. (London: Pen and Sword, 2005).
- ²⁶ Dunlop, xiii.
- ²⁷ Robert Lyman. *Slim, Master of War: Burma and the Birth of Modern Warfare*. (London: Constable & Robinson, 2004), 3.

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- ²⁸ Anderson, Duncan. "Slim: Field Marshal Lord Slim" in Churchill's Generals, ed. John Keegan 6694-7216. (London: Orion, 1991), 6815. Kindle e-book.
- ²⁹ Slim, 1956, 25, and Ch. 2.
- ³⁰ S. Woodburn Kirby. History of the Second World War, The United Kingdom Military Series - War Against Japan Volume III: The Decisive Battles. (East Sussex: Navy and Military Press, 1961), 45-52.
- ³¹ Slim, 1956, 192.
- ³² Slim, 1956, 219.
- ³³ Bond, 45.
- ³⁴ Kirby, Vol III, 40.
- ³⁵ Slim, 1956, 210.
- ³⁶ Slim, 1956, 193-194.
- ³⁷ U.S. DOD, *JP 3-31*, Ch. 3.
- ³⁸ Slim, 1956, 193.
- ³⁹ Slim, 1956, 248.
- ⁴⁰ Slim, 1956, Ch. 9.
- ⁴¹ Lyman, 2004, 227.
- ⁴² Field Marshal Viscount William Slim. "Higher Command in War". *Military Review* Vol LXX (May 1990), 14.
- ⁴³ See Tim Mooreman. The Jungle, Japanese and the British Commonwealth Armies at War, 1941-45: Fighting Methods, Doctrine and Training for Jungle Warfare. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 61-62.
- ⁴⁴ Mooreman, 86-108.
- ⁴⁵ Quoted in Mooreman, 110.
- ⁴⁶ Bond, 50.
- ⁴⁷ Bond, 51.
- ⁴⁸ Kirby, Vol. III, Ch. IX-X, and Slim, 1956, 256-283.
- ⁴⁹ Kirby, Vol. III, Ch. VI.
- ⁵⁰ Slim, 1956, 216.
- ⁵¹ Slim, 1956, 256-283.
- ⁵² Mooreman, 98.
- ⁵³ Lyman, 2005, 122-124.
- ⁵⁴ Slim, 1956, 282-283.
- ⁵⁵ Slim, 1956, 282.
- ⁵⁶ Kirby, Vol. III, Ch. VI.
- ⁵⁷ See Lyman, 2008, 254-293.
- ⁵⁸ Slim, 1956, 421.
- ⁵⁹ Slim, 1956, 339.
- ⁶⁰ Fergal Keane. *Road of Bones: The Epic Siege of Kohima 1944*. (London: HarperCollins, 2011), 157.
- ⁶¹ Slim, 1956, 339, and Keane, Ch. 11.
- ⁶² Keane, 157.
- ⁶³ Slim, 1956, 341-344.
- ⁶⁴ Lewin, 174-175.
- ⁶⁵ Keane, 168-169.
- ⁶⁶ See Keane, and Slim, 1956, Ch. 14.
- ⁶⁷ Bond, 2004, 120-122.
- ⁶⁸ Lewin, 176.
- ⁶⁹ Lewin.
- ⁷⁰ Lyman, 2011, 241-243.
- ⁷¹ Lyman, 2011, 243.
- ⁷² S. Woodburn Kirby. History of the Second World War, The United Kingdom Military Series - War Against Japan Volume IV: The Reconquest of Burma. (East Sussex: Navy and Military Press, 1961), 1-13.
- ⁷³ See Lewin, 190-191.
- ⁷⁴ Kirby, Vol. IV, 1-5.
- ⁷⁵ Kirby, Vol. IV, 3-5.
- ⁷⁶ Lyman, 2005, 116-118.
- ⁷⁷ Lewin, 212.

⁷⁸ Lyman, 2004, 233. Summary of operational challenges anticipated in plan for Operation CAPITAL. Slim would modify his original plan when it becomes clear the Japanese have withdrawn south of the Irrawaddy. Operation EXTENDED CAPITAL would see Slim fix the bulk of the Burma Area Army in their defensive positions in and around Mandalay along the Irrawaddy river line, as the IV Corps drives deep to seize the critical communications node at Meiktila. In the twin battles of Meiktila-Mandalay, the XIV Army destroyed the Japanese Army Group in Burma.

⁷⁹ Lyman, 233-234.

⁸⁰ Louis Allen, Allen, Louis. *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45*. London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 386.

⁸¹ Allen, 386, and 390.

⁸² Lewin, 209.

⁸³ Lewin, 209.

⁸⁴ Kirby, Vol. IV, 58-59.

⁸⁵ Slim, 1956, 448.

⁸⁶ Slim, 1956, 448-451.

⁸⁷ Kirby, Vol. IV, 163-169.

⁸⁸ Lyman, 2008, 332.

⁸⁹ Lyman, 2008, 321.

⁹⁰ Lewin, 209-213.

⁹¹ Kirby, Vol. IV, Ch. XXV.

⁹² Lyman, 2004, 251-253.

⁹³ Lewin, Ch. 13.

⁹⁴ Lyman, 2008, 332.

⁹⁵ Lewin, 210.

⁹⁶ Lyman, 2004, 1.

⁹⁷ Lyman, 2004, 63.

⁹⁸ Lyman, 2008, 298.

⁹⁹ Lyman, 2008, 298.

¹⁰⁰ Lyman, 2004, 66.

¹⁰¹ Carver, 388.

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